

STATE SENATOR • RAYMOND E. BASHAM • 8TH DISTRICT

Basham Press Release

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For Immediate Release
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LOCAL MOM FIGHTS TO PROTECT MILITARY SERVICES

Basham Legislation Would Prohibit Disrupting Military Funerals

LANSING- When Allen Park resident Nancy Pursley, the mother of a soldier currently serving in Iraq, read about how religious extremists were disrupting the funerals of U.S. military personnel, she asked State Sen. Ray Basham (D-Taylor) to introduce legislation to prevent it. On Wednesday, Nancy's moving testimony before a Senate committee helped Basham's legislation clear its first legislative hurdle.

"I can understand completely why the parents and loved ones of our military personnel would be upset at the thought of protesters disrupting the funerals of our fallen servicemen and women," said Basham. "I can not imagine anything more painful for a parent than burying a son or daughter who has just sacrificed their young life in service to our nation,"

Basham's legislation became necessary due to the unfortunate actions of groups like Rev. Fred Phelps and his congregation who have been organizing loud and disruptive protests at the funeral services of American military personnel, including two such protests here in Michigan. Phelps' protesters claim the death of U.S. soldiers is God's wrath on America for its sins.

Sen. Basham's legislation, SB 1171, is part of a package of bills that was approved Wednesday by the Senate Senior Citizens and Veteran Affairs Committee. Sen. Basham introduced his legislation after being contacted by Ms. Pursley in February.

The legislation will essentially prohibit these demonstrations within 500 feet of a military funeral service, memorial service, wake, or funeral procession. The first offense is a felony punishable by 2 years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine and subsequent offenses would be punishable by 4 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine.